

## Pseudoreflexives in Slovak

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In Slovak the reflexive particle *sa* has a variety of uses. In this paper I will discuss some problems with transitive and intransitive verbs having reflexive forms and passive meaning (pseudo-reflexives).

In traditional Slovak grammars, verbs are divided into personal and impersonal, e.g. *Ja čítam* 'I read', *Prší* 'It rains'. The impersonal verbs are characterized mostly negatively. Compared to personal verbs they have an incomplete inventory of grammatical forms. They have only a subjectless form, which is homonymous with the 3rd person singular neuter form of personal verbs.

Further, according to the description of traditional grammars, a personal verb occurs in a two-member sentence, i.e. in a sentence having a subject and a predicate, whereas an impersonal verb occurs in a one-member sentence, i.e. a sentence having only a predicate. Grammarians state that there was a tension created between one-member sentence constructions and personal verbs. A relatively young form of Slavic personal verbs--a reflexive form with a passive meaning--emerged to remove this tension. Thus in modern Slovak personal verbs can be used as the predicate of both a one-member sentence and two-member sentence. For example, personal, nonreflexive verbs *ísť* 'to go', *robiť* 'to work' have impersonal reflexive forms: *Íde sa* 'The walking goes on'; *Robí sa* 'The work goes on'.

The purpose of this paper is to point out some problems with the description of Slovak pseudo-reflexives. The framework used here is the Fillmorean case grammar.

The difference between personal non-reflexive versus personal reflexive verbs can be illustrated by the following examples:

- (1) *Ja čítam básen dobre.*  
"I read the poem well."
- (2) *Básen sa mi číta dobre.*  
"To me the poem reads well." (Literally: The poem  
itself to me reads well.)

In both sentences *ja*, 'I' is the agent. (1) is a more objective statement of somebody's action, which may but need not be modified by manner adverbial. In (2), the agent is at the same time the experiencer, who subjectively 'feels through' his own action, always evaluating it. The different attitude of the agent towards

the action can be seen in (3), (5), and (4), (6).

- (3) Učiteľka mi gratulovala, lebo som básen čítala dobre.  
 "The teacher congratulated me, because I read the poem well."
- (4) \*Učiteľka mi gratulovala, lebo básen sa mi čítala dobre.  
 "The teacher congratulated me, because to me the poem read well."
- (5) Pohanili Petra, že tak zle spieval.  
 "They reproached Peter, because he sang so badly."
- (6) \*Pohanili Petra, že sa mu tak zle spievalo.  
 "They reproached Peter, because his singing went on so badly."

In sentences (3) and (5), it can be the observer who evaluates the reading or singing of the agent, but in (4) and (6) it must be the agent himself who does so. In constructions like (2) there must be a coreferentiality between the agent and the experiencer.

Another peculiarity of construction (2) is that it must obligatorily contain an adverbial of evaluation, such as well, badly, pleasantly, etc. This is a subgroup of manner adverbials. On the other hand, any adverb can be used in personal, non-reflexive constructions like (1).

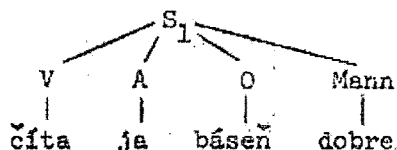
- (7) Ján číta básen v triede.  
 "John reads the poem in the classroom."
- (8) \*Básen sa Jánovi číta v triede.  
 "To John the poem reads in the classroom." (meaning that John is the agent.)
- (9) Eva neskoro napísala referát.  
 "Eva wrote the term paper too late."
- (10) \*Referát sa Eve napísal neskoro.  
 "To Eva, the term paper wrote too late."

To account for these differences between (1) and (2), the following deep structures are proposed:

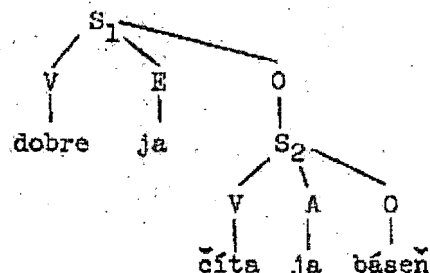
(11) DS for (1)

Rules:

Agent fronting



(12) DS for (2). Condition:  $E = A$



- a) Argument promotion
- b) Subject copying
- c) NP reduction
- d) Equi-NP-Deletion
- e) Subject Raising
- f) Predicate Raising

In the first cycle the following rules apply to (12): (a) Argument promotion is necessary because arguments are in hierarchical order with respect to the predicate. By promotion an argument which was chosen to become a subject is posited to the right of the verb. (b) Subject copying applies to an argument chosen to become a subject, and leaves a copy behind, when the subject is fronted (see R. Channon (1969)). (c) NP-Reduction. If two NPs in a proposition differ only by the fact that one of them lacks a case marker, the other will be reduced to the reflexive particle (see R. Channon (1969)).

In the second cycle, Equi-NP-Deletion, Subject Raising, and Predicate Raising apply to yield the terminal string.

An interesting problem arises if  $E = A$  = indefinite NP, as in an often cited example:

- (13) V továrni sa dobre pracuje.  
 "In this factory, the work goes on well."

The sentence (13) is ambiguous. The first reading is (13a) and the second (13b)

- (13) a. People (in general) work in this factory, and to them the work goes on well.  
 b. People (in general) work, and the properties of the factory makes the work go on well.

The reading of (13a) is comparable to the reading of (2), as given in the diagram (12). The reading of (13b) is impossible for (2), since (13b) presupposes that the work goes on and the factory has such properties as to make the action go well.

There are certain places which have a natural association with a certain action, such as opera house with singing, factory with working, etc. Examples:

- (14) V tejto čítárni sa dobre číta.  
 "In this reading-room, the reading goes on well."

- (15) Na universite sa dobre prednáša.  
 "At this university the lecturing goes on well."

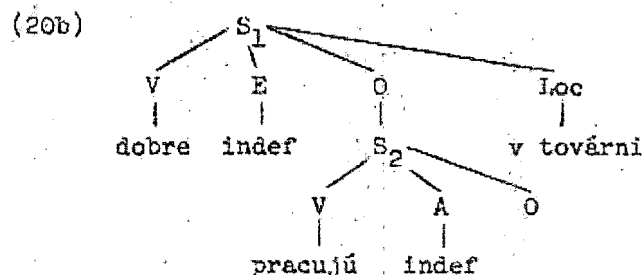
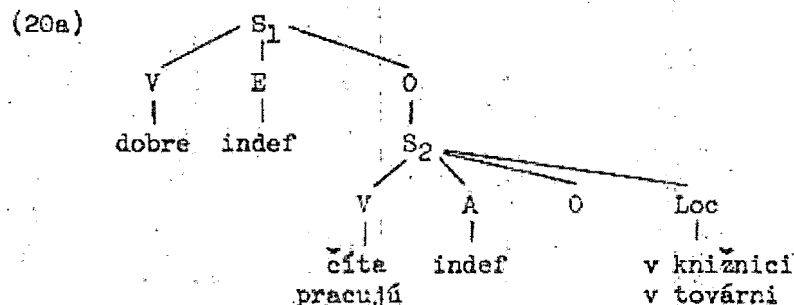
- (16) V tejto opere sa dobre spieva.  
 "In this opera house the singing goes on well."

If an action is connected with a place and has no natural associations with it, the presupposition does not hold, and the sentence has one reading only. Examples:

- (17) V tejto továrni sa dobre spieva.  
 "In this factory the singing goes on well."  
 (18) V tejto čitárni sa dobre klebetí.  
 "In this reading-room gossiping goes on well."  
 (19) V tejto opere sa dobre spí.  
 "In this opera house the sleeping goes on well."

Sentences (17) - (19) have an underlying structure comparable with that of (2). Locative appears in the lower sentence. Sentences (14) - (16) which have two readings, have two different underlying structures. With the reading of (13a), the locative is in the lower sentence. With the reading of (13b) the locative is in the higher sentence. This is the reading that requires a natural connection between the locative and the action.

The deep structures corresponding to (13a) and (13b) are (20a) and (20b).



There are certain further restrictions on adverbs, as (21) and (22) shows:

- (21) V knižnici sa mi { \*pozorne  
\*usilovne  
prijemne  
dobre } číta.

"In the library to me the reading goes \*carefully  
(\*diligently, pleasantly, well)."

- (22) V knižnici sa { pozorne  
usilovne  
prijemne  
dobre } číta.

"In the library the reading goes carefully (diligently,  
pleasantly, well)."

The choice of adverbs in (21) is restricted, since (21), like (13a) has one interpretation only, while (22) has two interpretations, analogous to (13a) and (13b). The deep structure shown in the diagram (12) accounts for (21), but not for (22). The additional restriction on acceptable adverbs in (21) is that the adverb must be stative.

Sentence (22) is problematic. In one reading, which is analogous to (13b), only stative adverbs (prijemne, dobre) are allowed. These adverbs are obligatory. In deep structure they are posited as higher predicates. In the other reading both stative and non-stative adverbs are allowed. These adverbs are optional and are not postulated as higher predicates. Non-stative adverbs occur in imperatives, but stative adverbs can not. Imperatives also require an agent.

- (23) Čítaj knihu pozorne!  
"Read the book carefully!"

- (24) \*Čítaj knihu dobre!  
"Read the book well!"

It seems to be the case that Experiencer allows only stative adverbs, which act as higher predicates.

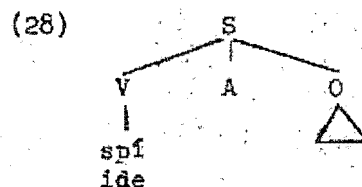
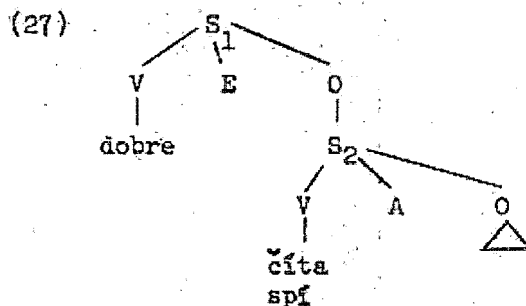
- (25) \*V knižnici sa mi číta.  
"In the library it reads to me."

- (26) \*Číta sa mi.  
"It reads to me."

As was noted above, non-stative adverbs imply the presence of an agent; these adverbs are not posited as higher predicates.

The same kind of problems arise with both transitive and intransitive verbs, when they are used in pseudo-reflexive constructions. Intransitive verbs show the same features as the transitive verbs

without an object. That is, they have the surface form of the 3rd person singular neuter. At present I have no better account for this fact than the following: Both have a dummy symbol in place of Object, which is copied and reduced to a reflexive particle. The deep structures are shown in (27) and (28).



Examples: (deep structure like (27))

- (29) Spí sa mi dobre.  
"To me the sleeping goes well."
- (30) Ide sa mi príjemne.  
"To me the walking goes on well."
- (31) Stavia sa mi dobre.  
"To me building goes well."

Examples (deep structure like (28))

- (32) Spí sa/ ide sa / stavia sa (dobre).  
"The sleeping/walking" building goes on (well)."

To summarize, the deep structures (27) and (28) are meant to account for the following facts: in (31) the adverb dobre describes the feeling of the experiencer of his own action. In (32) the adverb dobre refers to the quality of the result of the action.

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